

UNITED STATES
CONGRESS
OFFICE OF
BRAD CARSON
CONGRESSMAN
<http://www.carson.house.gov>



NEWS RELEASE
FOR MORE
INFORMATION
CONTACT:
Kendra Horn
(202) 225-2701

Congressman Carson fights for Indian Health Care

Carson testifies before the Interior Subcommittee about Indian Health Care funding needs

For Immediate Release
21 April 2004

Contact
Kendra Horn
(202) 225-2701

Washington, D.C. - Eastern Oklahoma Congressman Brad Carson (D-OK) testified today before the Interior Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Subcommittee about the need to improve funding for Indian Health Care in Oklahoma and throughout the nation. Congressman Carson's testimony focused on several solutions for improving Indian Health Service in Oklahoma.

"My testimony today provided an important opportunity to spotlight the current crisis in Indian Health Care that will only continue to worsen if these essential programs do not get the funding they need and deserve," said Congressman Carson. "It has been 30 years since the Indian Health Care Improvement Act was passed by Congress in 1975. This Act was intended to improve the healthcare of Indian people and yet today Indian people still suffer from the highest morbidity and mortality rates in this country."

According to a report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights from July 2003, Native Americans receive less funding per capita than any other group whose health care is funded by the federal government. This number includes Medicaid/Medicare recipients, veterans, and prisoners. The per capita health expenditure across the country is three times higher for the average American than what the I.H.S. spends on Native Americans. The disparity is even greater in Oklahoma where the average American receives five times more funding than Indian health care recipients in Oklahoma. This figure is significantly worse than the national average.

Oklahoma has the largest per-capita population of Native Americans and is second in total population of Indian people in the United States. The Indian Health Care System (I.H.S.) serves 302,500 patients in the Oklahoma Area alone. This is roughly 19% of the 1.6 million American Indians and Alaskan Natives served by the I.H.S. throughout the nation.

In his testimony today Congressman Carson addressed the severe disparity in funding for Indian Health care and requested increased funding for Indian Health Care programs. This funding would provide assistance to several of the Indian Health Care Centers in Oklahoma, would ultimately benefit the thousands of Native Americans served by these clinics.

Specifically, Congressman Carson encouraged the Committee to restore funding for a program that addresses the significant disparity in the distribution of funds among the twelve I.H.S. areas. In FY 2003 the omnibus appropriations bill provided \$26 million for this fund, of this amount almost \$10 million went to Oklahoma. However, the FY 2004 appropriations bill eliminated funding for this program.

Congressman Carson expressed his concern that the continued loss of these funds will have a devastating impact on the delivery of health care services to Oklahoma tribes, and urged the Committee to restore funding to this essential program.

“This current situation with Indian health care is unacceptable, and I will continue to do everything I can to improve the quality of Indian health care in Oklahoma.”